

In the claims:

Following is a complete set of claims as amended with this Response.

Claims 1-49 (Canceled)

50. (New) A method comprising:

transmitting bearer traffic messages from a user station to a first base station using successive time slots of a time division multiple access (TDMA) communication system, the TDMA system having a plurality of time frames each divided into a plurality of time slots;

receiving bearer traffic messages from the first base station using successive time slots of the TDMA system;

transmitting control traffic messages from the user station to a second base station during multiple time slots of a single time frame of the TDMA system; and

receiving control traffic messages from the second base station during multiple time slots of the single time frame, the control traffic messages being to hand off the user station from the first base station to the second base station.

51. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising establishing a duplex communication link between the user station and the second base station after transmitting and receiving the control traffic messages.

52. (New) The method of claim 51, further comprising receiving a time slot assignment for bearer communication between the user station and the second base station after receiving the control traffic messages.

53. (New) The method of claim 52, further comprising transmitting bearer traffic messages to the second base station during a time slot assigned for bearer communication with the second base station.

54. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein receiving control traffic messages from the second base station comprises receiving a next slot pointer.

55. (New) The method of Claim 54, wherein the next slot pointer points to a subsequent time slot for use in transmitting to the second base station.

56. (New) The method of claim 50, wherein transmitting control traffic messages from the user station to a second base station comprises transmitting the control traffic messages in a user transmission interval of the time slots of the single time frame, and wherein receiving control traffic messages from the base station comprises receiving the control traffic messages in a base station transmission interval of the time slots of the single time frame.

57. (New) The method of Claim 50, wherein transmitting control traffic messages to and receiving control traffic messages from the second base station is performed during transmitting bearer traffic messages to and receiving bearer traffic messages from the first base station.

58. (New) The method of Claim 56, further comprising discontinuing transmitting bearer traffic messages to and receiving bearer traffic messages from the first base station after transmitting control traffic messages to and receiving control traffic messages from the second base station.

59. (New) The method of claim 58, wherein the bearer traffic messages correspond to a call between the user station and a telephony network through the first base station, the method further comprising terminating the call through the first base

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station in response to discontinuing bearer traffic messages with the first base station and establishing the call between the user station and the network through the second base station.

60. (New) The method of Claim 50, wherein transmitting control traffic messages comprises transmitting control traffic messages during multiple virtual time slots and wherein receiving control traffic messages comprises receiving control traffic messages during multiple virtual time slots such that a control traffic message transmission and a next subsequent control traffic message reception are non-adjacent in time.

61. (New) A method comprising:

receiving bearer traffic messages from a user station at a first base station using successive time slots of a time division multiple access (TDMA) communication system, the TDMA system having a plurality of time frames each divided into a plurality of time slots;

transmitting bearer traffic messages from the first base station using successive time slots of the TDMA system;

receiving control traffic messages from the user station at a second base station during multiple time slots of a single time frame of the TDMA system; and

transmitting control traffic messages from the second base station during multiple time slots of the single time frame, the control traffic messages being to hand off the user station from the first base station to the second base station.

62. (New) The method of claim 61, further comprising establishing a duplex communication link between the user station and the second base station after receiving and transmitting the control traffic messages.

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63. (New) The method of claim 62, further comprising transmitting a time slot assignment from the second base station for bearer communication between the user station and the second base station after transmitting the control traffic messages.

64. (New) The method of claim 63, further comprising receiving bearer traffic messages at the second base station during a time slot assigned for bearer communication with the second base station.

65. (New) The method of claim 61, wherein transmitting control traffic messages from the second base station comprises transmitting a next slot pointer, the next slot pointer pointing to a subsequent time slot for use in transmitting to the second base station.

66. (New) The method of Claim 61, wherein receiving control traffic messages at and transmitting control traffic messages from the second base station is performed during receiving bearer traffic messages at and transmitting bearer traffic messages from the first base station.

67. (New) The method of Claim 66, wherein the bearer traffic messages correspond to a call between the user station and a telephony network through the first base station, the method further comprising:

discontinuing transmitting bearer traffic messages to and receiving bearer traffic messages from the first base station after transmitting control traffic messages to and receiving control traffic messages from the second base station;

terminating the call through the first base station in response to discontinuing bearer traffic messages with the first base station; and

establishing the call between the user station and the network through the second base station.

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68. (New) A user terminal comprising:

a transceiver and

a controller to perform operations through the transceiver, the operations including:

transmitting bearer traffic messages from a user station to a first base station using successive time slots of a time division multiple access (TDMA) communication system, the TDMA system having a plurality of time frames each divided into a plurality of time slots;

receiving bearer traffic messages from the first base station using successive time slots of the TDMA system;

transmitting control traffic messages from the user station to a second base station during multiple time slots of a single time frame of the TDMA system; and

receiving control traffic messages from the second base station during multiple time slots of the single time frame, the control traffic messages being to hand off the user station from the first base station to the second base station.

69. (New) The user terminal of claim 68, wherein the operations further comprise receiving a time slot assignment for bearer communication between the user station and the second base station after receiving the control traffic messages.

70. (New) The user terminal of claim 69, wherein the operations further comprise transmitting bearer traffic messages to the second base station during a time slot assigned for bearer communication with the second base station.

71. (New) The user terminal of claim 68, wherein transmitting control traffic messages from the user station to a second base station comprises transmitting the control traffic messages in a user transmission interval of the time slots of the single time frame,

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and wherein receiving control traffic messages from the base station comprises receiving the control traffic messages in a base station transmission interval of the time slots of the single time frame.

72. (New) A wireless communications system comprising:

a first base station, the first base station receiving bearer traffic messages from a user station using successive time slots of a time division multiple access (TDMA) communication system, the TDMA system having a plurality of time frames each divided into a plurality of time slots, and transmitting bearer traffic messages using successive time slots of the TDMA system; and

a second base station, the second base station receiving control traffic messages from the user station during multiple time slots of a single time frame of the TDMA system, and transmitting control traffic messages from during multiple time slots of the single time frame, the control traffic messages being to hand off the user station from the first base station to the second base station.

73. (New) The system of claim 72, wherein the second base station further establishes a duplex communication link between the user station and the second base station after receiving and transmitting the control traffic messages.

74. (New) The system of claim 72, wherein the second base station further transmits a time slot assignment to the user terminal for bearer communication between the user station and the second base station and receives bearer traffic messages at the during the assigned time slot.

75. (New) The system of claim 72, wherein the second base station in transmitting control traffic messages transmits a next slot pointer, the next slot pointer pointing to a subsequent time slot for use in transmitting to the second base station.

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76. (New) The system of Claim 72:

wherein the bearer traffic messages correspond to a call between the user station and a telephony network through the first base station;

wherein the first base station discontinues transmitting bearer traffic messages to and receiving bearer traffic messages from the user terminal after the second base station transmits control traffic messages to and receives control traffic messages from the user terminal;

wherein the first base station terminates the call through the first base station in response to discontinuing bearer traffic messages; and

wherein the base station establishes the call between the user station and the network through the second base station.